

It is with great interest that I have read some of the comments and letters in response to the proposal; and feel compelled to write the following letter.

I cannot believe how the cable industry trivializes the digital conversion and the all-encryption proposal as having no significant impact for the consumer; when it presents nothing but confusion, inconveniences and extra costs for the cable subscriber.

The issue may be insignificant for the cable company CEOs who have millions of dollars of annual income and who probably enjoy an unlimited number of free cable boxes throughout their house. It is not to the consumer.

Let us not forget, that it is their cable companies stand to profit very significantly from this proposal; because, in the end, these two transitions pave the way for " pay per device " cable viewing and force the rental of their hardware for certain things that have been possible with 3rd party hardware.

Once the industry is allowed to encrypt everything, people will need to pay more to continue to view cable. There's no way around it. Not one device I own or have seen in a store can decrypt the encrypted signal, so you will pay the fee and/or rent per device for decryption, every month.

When is enough, enough? The consumer did not ask for DTV and its antenna boxes, nor removing analog cable and certainly not going all-encrypted.

The public at large is blind-sighted when these things are rolled out by the cable companies. We've just filled up the local dump with our old tube TVs and upgraded to flat screen HDTVs to receive DTV & Clear QAM. Now we have another round of forced obsolescence and upgrades?

I was absolutely stunned when Time Warner Cable started to phase out analog cable in my area. I live in the Kennebec County pilot project, so I have first hand experience. Allow me to tell you that, as a matter of fact, the Time Warner Cable staff wasn't at all prepared for the digital cable initiative. In weeks leading up to the transition, several

consumers were better informed through the internet then the local staff was and let alone the 1-800 line who hadn't a clue when I asked about the Digital Cable Adapter. For the longest time the Digital Cable transition pages at TWC contained factual errors leading to a lot of misinformation & confusion.

Mind you, that I'm one of the many people who follow tech news on pretty much a daily basis and not one person I know had heard a word about rendering analog cable obsolete. Same thing with the going all-encrypted proposal. This is all happening behind the scenes and under the radar, until it is too late for consumers to respond. Just look how few people and companies have had a chance to respond to this filing, out of the entire population and the entire 3rd party industry that this change affects.

It is not that the people don't care, it is that they don't know about these filings & proposals from the industry until it is too late and already passed.

Living in the pilot area of Kennebec County in Maine, nobody, let me repeat that: nobody, I have talked to in recent months who did not already have cable boxes and higher tier service; likes these mandatory digital cable adapters, seeing their analog equipment obsoleted nor the inconveniences and the future fees that will come with them. The extra dollar for viewing cable on a TV set is the least of the problem. It is rendering perfectly good hardware obsolete with encryption that is downright infuriating. Going digital can be chalked up to progress. HDTV is most welcome, that is a step forward. Rendering dozens of devices obsolete with encryption is not.

Does the FCC know that the Digital Cable Adapters that have been provided are Standard Definition only?

That these adapters do not have Clear QAM pass-through?

So that people viewing their regular programming have had to forgo High-Def for months, or if they are in the know buy cable splitters & A/B switches per TV to manually switch between SD only channels from the adapter & HD Clear QAM from the TV Tuner?

Also, note that one the one TV we have equipped with a Digital Cable

Adapter, we've had continuous issues with losing channels. The device is reset & reactivated and one is supposed to wait 45 min to an hour for the signal to come back. When we did this again last night it took several other channels down with it, and 24 hours later these have not been restored. Mind you that we never had these issues with the usual mix of analog TV and clear-qam for the last 6 years or more.

That is why I find appalling that some people, working for the industry, say that going all-digital and all-encrypted has had insignificant side effects for the consumer.

I will give you a few examples to the contrary.

Our home is pretty high on tech and wired for phone, tv & internet in all rooms. We have downgraded from cable boxes and switched to a lower tier service; making the conscious choice to enjoy viewing convenience throughout the house over having 400 plus channels available in one room. As such we have several HDTVs, recording devices and even cable ethernet devices that make live tv available throughout the ethernet & wifi network inside and outside the home.

Now let's look at some of these "insignificant inconveniences" in my household. Things that are no longer possible or work as designed:

- use \$100+ all-in-one remotes to control home theater (doesn't control cable adapter)
- use TV remote solely (need to use adapter remote to switch channels, adapter remote does not control our tv sets)
- record on vcr (doesn't interface / control channels on the cable adapter)
- record on hard drive digital video recorder (doesn't control cable adapter)
- record on dvd ram digital video recorder (doesn't control cable adapter)
- use picture in picture on HDTVs with analog tuner & digital tuner (adapters needed)
- use picture in picture on HDTVs with dual digital tuners (adapters needed)
- use two or more devices in one room ... as they now all require their own cable box or adapter, which all react to any cable adapter remote; we actually had 6 devices in our media room, now we are down to two: one HDTV has HD fed directly from cable through HDTV Clear Qam tuner; the

second TV the gets all-encrypted SD cable signal decoded from the time warner digital cable adapter

- use two hdtvs in gym room ... same problem with two adapters, try to change one channel, both switch, only SD quality
  - view & record programming on media center computer, have two of those, now obsolete (can't control cable adapter)
  - use an aftermarket tv tuner in your computer or as an add-on ...
- sidenote: the entire 3rd party manufacturer computer cable adapter market gets wiped out
- use a slingbox pro to redistribute analog tv via ethernet & wifi (can't control the adapter)
  - use slingbox pro hd to redistribute analog & digital tv via ethernet & wifi (can't control the adapter)
  - viewing cable tv on a mobile device like iPad or iPod Touch inside or outside the house from a networked cable device such as the slingbox

Because of the change

- consumers currently lose HDTV signals ... I have two of these adapters, they're Standard Definition only and employ an inferior tuner than many \$\$\$\$ HDTV sets, plus they are prone to interference and don't like longer cable runs
- you are to use a cable adapter per device, which of course requires a power outlet, and may be completely impractical to install with hanging HDTVs, tight spaces etc. that were only provisioned to have the TV.
- you are to use the cable adapter remote per device in conjunction with your own remote because dozens of TV features that require you to use your own remote

Inconvenient expenses that benefit the cable operators:

- you are to pay rent every month for every cable adapter device, after the free intro period
- if you want to use a dvr, you can now only use the cable company dvr, for which you will upgrade to a higher tier cable package and rent the dvr every month from the cable company, and pay extra for the remote
- if you want to stream cable tv within your household, you will upgrade to a higher tier cable package and stream the cable company's signal from their servers or cable box

- if you want to record something and play it back in another room you will rent extra cable boxes with such capability

So, are these are all completely insignificant inconveniences? Which result in extra charges to continue the same level of cable tv viewing people have enjoyed nationwide, by paying for cable service.

And, please note that these changes don't just affect people with lower tier service, as the cable companies point out. No, this also affects people who have higher tier service; as they also have had the same Clear QAM benefits on additional TVs and equipment they own. We used to have higher tier service and enjoyed non-encrypted service of basic channels on the additional TVs & slingbox etc. As a matter of fact we couldn't get HD through the rented box from Adelphia cable without further upgrading our service; even though we already the HD signal directly from the wall through the Clear QAM tuner.

That just to say that this change doesn't just affect people who are regular or basic cable subscribers - and therefor would be a small fraction or minority of cable subscribers, possibly (I don't have those numbers as a consumer) - no, this affects every single cable subscriber nationwide who has a second or third TV without the box or any additional viewing or recording equipment.

In addition to seeing dozens of devices obsoleted; the consumer is now responsible for what used to be the truck roll. Coax cables will remain permanently attached at the pole near the residence and the consumer becomes responsible for connecting and disconnecting their service by picking up and returning several digital cable adapters, getting those authorized and de-authorized on/off the cable network etc and likely pays fees at some point in the future ... whenever they move. The significant savings in labor, time, equipment, fuel, etc that do not get passed onto the consumer; even though cable companies already enjoy significant profits.

Options? Alternatives?

There are none really.

And the cable companies know it.

They conveniently state, that we are free to leave, don't have to subscribe to them and can switch to another provider or drop back to over the air service; ... full well knowing the small details, that in many cases:

- the cable company has a cable monopoly in town (I know they do where I have lived they were always the only provider)
- many people live in a rural state, possibly with diverse terrain, too far away from tv transmission towers to enjoy multiple stations via over the air broadcasts
- most people prefer just a little something more than the handful of local stations; so they will not drop cable for the few channels they can get over the air ... hence they are forced to stick with whatever the cable company says is going to happen if they want to keep their 24 or 70 channels.
- satellite has since inception been encrypted, so people who want / wanted to avoid cable boxes really don't want satellite boxes

This whole multi-step plan of reclaiming bandwidth, going all digital and now encrypting all signals; is a very big win-win-win for the cable company, without any benefits whatsoever to the consumer: it doesn't improve service; it doesn't make access more convenient; it obsoletes a ton of consumer equipment in the process and doesn't lower the bill.

I sincerely hope that the FCC can understand a concerned consumer's point of view: that going all-encrypted, after we've all bought HDTVs to be DTV & Clear QAM compatible, is one step too far.

I would like to conclude by saying that, the FCC is failing consumers nationwide, by lack of transparency in proceedings like these that affect everybody in this country financially, directly and indirectly.

The FCC should years ago, in its long term plans, already have had an action plan regarding this, with 100% transparency to the public at large and have ensured that all cable viewing & recording equipment that has been sold in retail over the past 5 years or more, was already equipped with whatever hardware or chip-set needed to deal with digitally encrypted cable - if - the FCC thinks that is the way cable

should be from now on; so that consumers are not caught of guard as they are now and so they wouldn't be facing needing additional hardware, incur additional fees, forced to rent equipment instead of using what they already own.

Sincerely,

Frank Dobbelaere,  
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